

2004 Idaho SCORTP Regional Recreation Provider Focus Groups
Executive Summary
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Eight regional Recreation Provider focus groups were conducted this spring and summer as a part of the needs assessment component of Idaho's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan. The aim was to uncover recreation issues of importance as well as unmet community recreation needs around the state. The recreation topics explored in the focus group sessions and the data gathered during the sessions are presented below.

Complete Answers to the Recreation Providers' Focus Group Questions

- Question (1).**
- a. What do you believe is the greatest outdoor recreation need in this region (unmet needs)?
 - b. Who do you believe should meet/address this need, and how can that best be done?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Designate trails for OHVs, and develop trail loops that will create multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional trail connectivity networks. (13)
- Create integrated public recreation management through partnerships and collaboration with other recreation agencies. (8)
- Need for more accessible public open spaces with trail connectivity to be included in urban planning. (7)
- Shortage of public recreation facilities. (5)
- Improve public recreational water access. (4)
- Use varied attributes of the area to create a regional destination resort. (3)
- Education programs are needed to define different recreation opportunities in different settings and their associated land ethic. (2)
- More family-oriented youth sports facilities needed. (2)
- Variety of camping opportunities with river access needed. (2)
- There is a need to emphasize the importance of proper maintenance of the existing infrastructure. (2)
- Dependable recreation information source needed for users. (2)
- Provide boardwalks and quieter access to wildlife viewing. (1)

- More non-municipal /non-urban parks that are not too far from home are needed. (1)
- Need for inter-state cooperation in law enforcement and coordination in recreation management. (1)
- Some facilities are needed for the growing sport of Lacrosse. (1)
- Proactive management master plans needed for riparian resources, like the Boise river and the Greenbelt. (1)
- Off-leash dog parks and trails needed. (1)
- Stunt parks that offer challenge adventure experiences are needed. (1)
- Interpretation as an outdoor education management tool and as a good interface between the community and the resource, is lacking. (1)
- Studies are needed to better understand the recreation and tourism growth potential of the area, and the possible directions for future growth. (1)
- Create water trails and moorage facilities for non-motorized vessels. (1)
- Deficient information in southeast Idaho about the availability and accessibility to recreation opportunities. (1)
- Shortage of specialized activities. (1)
- Inadequate funding for recreation operations. (1)
- ATV activities must be managed in this region because of the presence of grizzly bear recovery areas in some parts of the region. (1)
- Introduce an educational course or licensing scheme as a prerequisite to operating ATVs on public lands. (1)
- Create reality advertisements that counter the fantasy advertisements of OHV manufacturers, about OHV operation. (1)
- Snowmobile maps could serve as models for creating good maps. (1)

Question (2) – a. Major Problems Regarding Outdoor Recreation in Idaho
 b. How Would You Go About Solving Those Problems?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Conflicts among different recreationists sharing a resource. (5)
- Narrowness of the missions of individual land management agencies and their funding source-driven priorities ignores other possible recreation opportunities. (3)

- Lack of consistent and appropriate signage practices and other regulations at public recreation sites. Statewide default position needed on designation of routes and trails as open or closed. (3)
- Education and marketing – A need to sell recreation to decision makers and the public. (3)
- A need for coordination of recreation providers' activities. (3)
- Unfunded and hardly managed dispersed recreation sites. (3)
- Lack of a consistent statewide approach to OHV use on public lands. (2)
- Lack of a centralized inter-agency information website. (1)
- Lack of templates of measurement/recommended measures of recreation needs per population base. (1)
- Geocaching is beginning to pose a problem of resource damage. (1)
- A need to institute rescue insurance to reduce the burden of rescue costs on local authorities. (1)
- Vandalism (1)
- Lack of carrying capacity information, and peak use time information for recreation sites. (1)
- Lack of funding for non-motorized recreation compared to motorized recreation. (1)
- Need for IDPR to Make its good recreation facilities and/or expertise more available to other recreation providers (or within the IDPR system). (1)
- Private land purchases limiting public access to water for recreation. (1)
- Outdated/inappropriate campsite facilities. (1)
- Trail pioneering. (1)
- Need for more data gathering and analysis. (1)
- Neglect of maintenance. (1)
- Lands Department cannot regulate public recreational use on endowment lands. (1)
- Inadequate land acquisition leading to loss of some of the best lands to developers. (1)
- Group campgrounds needed in places like Hells Gate. (1)
- A statewide trail system coordinator is needed. (1)

Question (3) a. What is the most important service, product or facility that the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) offers to you?

- b. What service, product or facility does the IDPR not offer that you would like to see offered in the future?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Important products/facilities/services offered by IDPR:

Answers:

- Grants for funding recreation projects. (7)
- Coordination of inter-agency recreation planning statewide. (4)
- IDPR as a resource for education on recreation. (1)

Products, services or facilities that IDPR does not offer but that I would like to see offered in the future:

Answers:

- IDPR should make their expertise available to other providers to create recreation facilities (or within the IDPR system). (7)
- Establish an accessible one-stop source of information (possibly web-based). (5)
- Lobby for and market recreation to the public and to decision makers to inform people of recreation opportunities and to improve funding. (5)
- Lack of funding for non-motorized recreation. (3)
- Seek new grants and other funding sources for recreation projects. (3)
- More emphasis on the coordination of inter-agency recreation planning statewide. (2)
- It should be possible for IDPR grant money to be used for facility rehabilitation. (1)
- IDPR should lead the way to promote the formulation of consistent recreation regulations statewide at the recreation sites of all land management agencies. (1)
- The maintenance of existing parks and recreation system, and ensuring that they remain financially accessible to all should be a major priority of IDPR. (1).

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Question (4) – How well do diverse recreationists get along in this region when they jointly use the same recreation sites/resources?

Think of such recreationists as ATV riders, Snowmobilers, motorcyclists, cross-country skiers, trail hikers, horse riders, mountain bikers, trail bikers hunters etc.

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Downward hierarchy of tolerance among land-based trail users – balkanization of trail users. (3)
- Getting groups together to discuss their disagreements can sometimes lead to more acceptable solutions to their differences. (3)
- Designate segregated areas for different recreation activities. (3)
- Set the expectations about the other types of users likely to be sharing multiple use resource, through educational techniques and signage. (2)
- Perennial polarization between motorized and non-motorized recreationists. and lack of consistent operation guidelines and trail designation information foster conflict. (2)
- A comprehensive education outreach program can, at least, minimize conflicts. (2)
- Encourage self-policing through grassroots groups to improve rule enforcement. (2)
- Recreation providers should work out ‘common ground’ rules. (2)
- Cross country skiers versus snowmobilers. (2)
- Conflict between ATV hunters and non-ATV using hunters. (2)
- Tensions between boaters and swimmers. (1)
- The “how” of access to the public lands should be viewed as a privilege and not a right. (1)
- The activities of one recreation group impacting the quality, the success or the safety of the activities of another may cause tensions. (1)
- A “tourist takeover” fear by local residents can cause tensions. (1)
- Destination tourism diversifying away from resource-based economies and toward multiple use of resources may generate conflict with entrenched values. (1)
- Conflict between jet skiers and other boaters. (1)
- Recreation activities occurring near population centers generate bigger conflicts than in more remote areas. (1)

- Inter-generational and intercultural tensions get manifested in recreation activities. (1)
- Organized groups versus non-organized groups of users. (1)
- The provision of more access for motorized recreation could meet the surging demand and reduce conflicts. (1)
- Connectivity of trails reduces switching back on the same trails - and meeting other users coming from the opposite direction. (1)
- OHV hunters versus recreationists on foot and on horseback. (1)
- More enforcement for motorized user constraints could reduce tensions. (1)
- Involve user groups in planning facilities and programs to catch conflicts early. (1)
- Resource managers need to have guiding principles indicating the ultimate outcome ideas that guide their decision-making, especially in resolving conflicts.(1)
- Resource managers should beware of quick fixes under political pressure on issues of conflict. (1)
- The use of social science research by IDPR to study the issues surrounding conflict in recreation is a good idea. (1)
- Mountain bikers versus ATV users. (1)
- Mountain bikers versus hikers. (1)
- Backcountry skiers versus snowmobilers. (1)
- Encourage stickers for dog sledges. (1)
- Extreme skiers versus traditional backcountry skiers. (1)
- Speed differential conflicts, even among non-motorized recreationists. (1)

- Question (5)** – a. Where would you Locate a New State Park in Idaho if Funding were Available for one?
b. Why would you Locate it There?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- A water access park. (6)
- A park that holistically blends different recreation opportunity sets, and promotes fair access by filling in voids of recreation opportunities locally (Eastern Idaho deserves a new state park for that reason. (3)
- A dunes park. (2)
- An RV park. (2)
- An OHV park. (2)
- Instead of a new state park, use the money to maintain the existing parks and the trail system. (2)
- A park that allows for a partnership with another land management agency such as BLM or the Lands Department. (2)
- A heritage (historical theme) park. (1)
- A non-motorized river park. (1)
- A horse-friendly camping park with stables. (1)
- An urban dog park (where people can walk and train their dogs off-leash).(1)
- Emerging urban sports (skateboarding, snowboarding, BMX tracks and bowling greens). (1)
- A shooting range at Hells Gate, in partnership with Fish and Game. (1)
- A centennial park between Hells Gate and Dworshak. (1)
- A wildlife and other nature interpretation park (1)
- A mountain park (Craig Mountain as a state park). (1)

Question (6) – a. Do you believe that the recreation activity(ies) that you provide (please name it/them), gets a fair share of attention (in terms of public investment in facilities, personnel, programs, the level of fees charged etc.), when compared to other recreation activities?

–Explain why you feel that way

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Non-motorized activities generally are not getting their fair share of attention in public recreation investment. (3)
- Create a water endowment fund to purchase recreation rights and invest in water storage for recreation. (3)
- Lobbying needed at the state level, as little attention is given by the Idaho State Legislature to state recreation issues. (2)
- Public funding for recreational investments should be based less on the size of the resident population, and more on which sites bear the brunt of recreational impacts. (1)
- Public recreation investment should promote a fair share of economic development in the rural areas. (1)
- Interpretive boards for wildlife viewing are a neglected public recreation investment area. (1)
- Funding or public investment in recreation activities should be sensitive to intra-activity segmentation of user needs. (1)
- Boater's registration fees are too low, but the ability of users to designate primary and secondary use areas is good.(1)
- Funding or public investment in recreation activities should be sensitive to differences in needs based on intra-activity segmentation. (1)
- Investment in shooting ranges is needed. (1)
- Public recreation investments are excessively driven by the capacity of recreation activities to generate revenue. (1)
- Funding for public recreation investment in federal land management agencies is inadequate. Federal agencies try to do more with less.(1)
- Agencies should search for more creative revenue-boosting recreation investment strategies. (1)

- Shortage of winter trail recreation for the transients in the Challis area needs to be addressed. (1)
- Investment in natural history interpretation of the unique geology and flora of the area is needed around the Challis area is needed. (1)
- IDPR has an unfair monopoly of some LWCF grant money. (1)
- Lobbying is needed at a national level for an expanded share of LWCF funds for the states. (1)
- There is unfair neglect of investments for ATV activities. (1)
- Education programs get short changed in funding and investment. (1)
- There is little funding for enforcement of recreation regulations. (1)

Question (7) – a. How good is the level of communication between recreation providers in this region and recreationists?

Especially address issues of site regulations, risks/safety issues, and the responsibilities that recreationists should have toward other participants in certain recreation activities, etc?

b. How could the quality of communication between the providers and the recreationists be improved?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Where one-on-one communication with users is possible, like in the parks, or at the points of contact at which visitors can get information from staff (especially if these points are not too far from recreation sites), communication is much better between providers and users. (6)
- IDPR, as a possible information broker between providers and recreationists, could provide some quality control over recreation information publications and forums for discussion among provider, and provider/recreationists outreach. (5)
- Communication with motorized recreationists is poor. Regional information ‘guides’ are needed at such facilities as designated ATV riding areas. (3)
- Communications are easier with users who belong to associations or clubs. (2)
- Use education tools like games, activities and programming to improve communications between providers and recreationists. (2)

- Mixed performance of agencies in communicating their message to users. Communications with hunters are generally superior. (2)
- A variety of communication methods are required for providers to reach different user groups. (2)
- Improved websites and digitization of information documents help enhance communications. (1)
- Providers have good communications with specialized groups, but not with each others' groups. (1)
- Poor signage and vandalism interrupt communication. (1)
- Communication should give greater prominence to the concept of educating users about possible impacts. (1)
- Communication between providers and local user groups, and among the local groups themselves is better than communication with, and among visiting outsiders. (1)
- "Empty nesters" are more accessible for communication purposes. (1)
- Besides working with outfitters, the Idaho Travel Council should also partner with local recreation providers to create joint publicity content that is up-to-date. (1)

- Question (8)** –
- a. Have you seen any evidence of inefficient use of resources by IDPR?
 - b. If yes, please give a further explanation of the circumstances.

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic:

Answers:

- Difficulty figuring out where to get specific data in IDPR. A one-stop data shopping area is needed. (2)
- Access to specialized staff at the regions improves their value. (2)
- Insufficient law enforcement personnel. (1)
- Let the grants fiscal year match the federal fiscal year. (1)
- Are cabins at Hells Gate worth the investment expense?(1)
- Out-of-control noxious weeds on the bike trail at Hells Gate State Park. (1)
- Put seasonal trail rangers to work in the shoulder seasons. (1)
- Invest in the resources and facilities, not just in people (staff/users). (1)
- Users should be informed about how their fees are used. (1)

- The new structure of IDPR is not yet fully understood by people outside the department for them to make a judgment on efficiency (1)
- Great Job. (1)

- (9). If you could do just one thing to drastically improve recreation in Idaho, what would it be?

Overall of Ranking of number of comments per topic (Recreation Providers):

Answers:

1. IDPR should assume a leadership role in creating a statewide multi-land management agency partnership to jointly address recreation planning that focuses on regional-based management

Systematic and regular meetings of heads and senior staff of land management agencies should be held to strategize on SCORTP-led inter-agency recreation planning and collaboration.
3. Give issues related to the funding (and staffing) of recreation a higher profile.
4. Increase/improve public access to water recreation, and access to the public lands for recreational purposes
5. The emphasis was put on access to water recreation
6. Create educational/information programs on ethical OHV trail use, and support the launching of a more general national campaign to educate the general public on the land use ethic.
7. Adopt more aggressive marketing techniques to sell the benefits of outdoor recreation to the public and to decision makers (*compare the marketing style of the YMCA, with video testimonials*).
8. Preserve open spaces that are accessible to the public, and available for organized group activities, especially since private developers are gobbling up the best lands
9. IDPR should coordinate the development of operational guidelines for trails, from a regional perspective (*internal regional connectivity*)
10. IDPR should promote more effective management of reservoir water storage (*storing more water downstream in the Chesterfield dam rather than upstream would provide more recreation opportunities, without negatively impacting farm needs further downstream*)
11. Studies on the economic impact of recreation on Idaho should be a priority.
12. Riparian greenways should be developed. For example, a comprehensive management plan for the Boise River is a necessity.
13. Design simple, up-to-date, inclusive recreation maps for all land management agency areas.
14. Create close-to-home middle level skill trail systems to improve community connectivity.